DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 401 833 HE 029 683

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TITLE Hidden Rules, Secret Agendas: Challenges Facing Contemporary Women Doctoral Students.
PUB DATE 20 Apr 95
NOTE 51p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association (San Francisco, CA, April 20, 1995).
PUB TYPE Viewpoints (Opinion/Position Papers, Essays, etc.) (120) -- Speeches/Conference Papers (150)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC03 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Academic Aspiration; Age Discrimination; Collegiality; *Doctoral Degrees; *Females; *Graduate Students; Graduate Study; Higher Education; Individual Development; Mentors; Role Conflict; *Sex Bias; *Sex Discrimination; Student Motivation; Womens Education

ABSTRACT

Studies indicate that, although enrollment and degree production by women doctoral students have increased, fewer women than men complete doctorates and women generally take longer than men to finish, in spite of the fact that women demonstrate equal if not superior performance levels on virtually every objective measure. Women who complete the doctorate are more likely than men to face unemployment or to be employed in part-time and non-tenure track positions. The male orientation of the academy, gender stereotyping, greater self-selection on the part of women, and role conflict experienced by women are factors contributing to this phenomenon. Institutional practices relating to research funding and financial support, the departmental climate, and mentoring relationships also serve to influence the progress of women. This study, based on e-mail interviews with 55 women doctoral students, attempted to identify the factors that contribute to persistence in women pursuing doctorates. Preliminary findings suggest that women pursue the doctorate for reasons of personal development rather than reasons of career, but encounter formidable obstacles in the process, including hidden agendas, unspoken rules, and silent sanctions on the part of the academy. An appendix (Contains 61 references.) (PRW)

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ED 401 833

HIDDEN RULES, SECRET AGENDAS:

Challenges Facing Contemporary Women Doctoral Students

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A paper presented at the annual meeting of the
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HIDDEN RULES, SECRET AGENDAS:

Challenges Facing Contemporary Women Doctoral Students

Introduction

This paper examines women's understandings of their doctoral experiences and the critical challenges they encounter in pursuit of the Ph.D. It explores some of the primary themes emerging from a study currently in progress in which 35 women reflect on their experiences as doctoral students through private exchanges of electronic mail with the researcher. This is a story of women's voices. It is a story of women who, in order to give meaning to their lives, have chosen a path of academic scholarship.

In these stories, like stories of the science fiction genre where the normal rules that govern society and civilized social intercourse are altered (and on occasion suspended altogether), the agendas are not always visible, the endings are not always predictable, and memories of the doctoral experience are not always coveted.

> I really had no idea, though I suspected that it would be both hard and invigorating ... It represented being able to become a professor, and that meant a certain freedom of thought and flexibility of lifestyle that I desired.
>
> I would say I no longer think of the degree as a means to an end, as I don't expect it will get me a job. The degree itself means very little to me now, though I suppose it means most when I think of it as an official marker that I've finished my dissertation. It gives me a good reason to have a party. I know that probably sounds flip, but it's not meant to be.
>
> (Karen, Doctoral Candidate)

* * *

> I thought it was going to be difficult and challenging. I was afraid everyone would be smarter than me. I thought I would learn a tremendous amount. I thought it would be fun. I expected to really learn and grow.
>
> It has been difficult and challenging, not because everyone is smarter than me but because the faculty is insane. As for how my views have changed, I guess I'd have to say I've lost my innocence. I had originally thought the process was set up to help me learn as much as possible, but now I realize that the process is mostly political and has very little to do with helping students learn. I feel pretty disillusioned.
>
> (Margaret, Doctoral Candidate)

Women's Participation in Higher Education

In the post-war period of the 1960s, higher education in North America saw massive expansion in both faculty teaching positions and student enrollments. In Canada, the full-time university teaching staff increased from 4,973 to 29,710 between 1956 and 1975 with more than 10,000 new teaching positions created between 1964 and 1972 in the humanities and the social sciences alone (Cude, 1988, p. 20). In the United States, between 1965 and 1975 the student population grew from 6 million to 11 million (Finnegan, 1993). During this period and in the decades that followed, women's rates of participation in higher education also increased steadily. Today more than half the undergraduate student population in both Canada and the United States is composed of women (Caplan, 1994).

Graduate Enrollment

More women are enrolled in graduate education programs today than in any previous period in history (Bowen and Rudenstine, 1992). In Canada in 1971, women represented 22% of the full-time and 24% of the part-time graduate enrollment (Education in Canada, 1991). By 1988 these figures had doubled to 41% and 51% respectively (Caplan, 1994) and they remained virtually unchanged in 1991. Between 1982 and 1992, part-time enrollments increased by 5%; however all of this growth occurred in the female enrollment while the part-time enrollment of men changed little (Education in Canada, 1991). In the US women's graduate enrollments also increased and by 1992, women represented 52% of the total graduate enrollment in 1992 (Council of Graduate Schools, 1993).

Doctoral Enrollment

In Canada, although the enrollment of women in doctoral programs has climbed steadily over the years (Figure 1; see Appendix A), men's enrollments continue to surpass those of women (Dagg, 1989). In 1972 women represented 19.5% of Canada's total doctoral enrollment. By 1994 this figure increased to 37.7% of Canada's total enrollment of 26,081 doctoral students (Canadian Association of Graduate Studies Statistical Report, 1994).

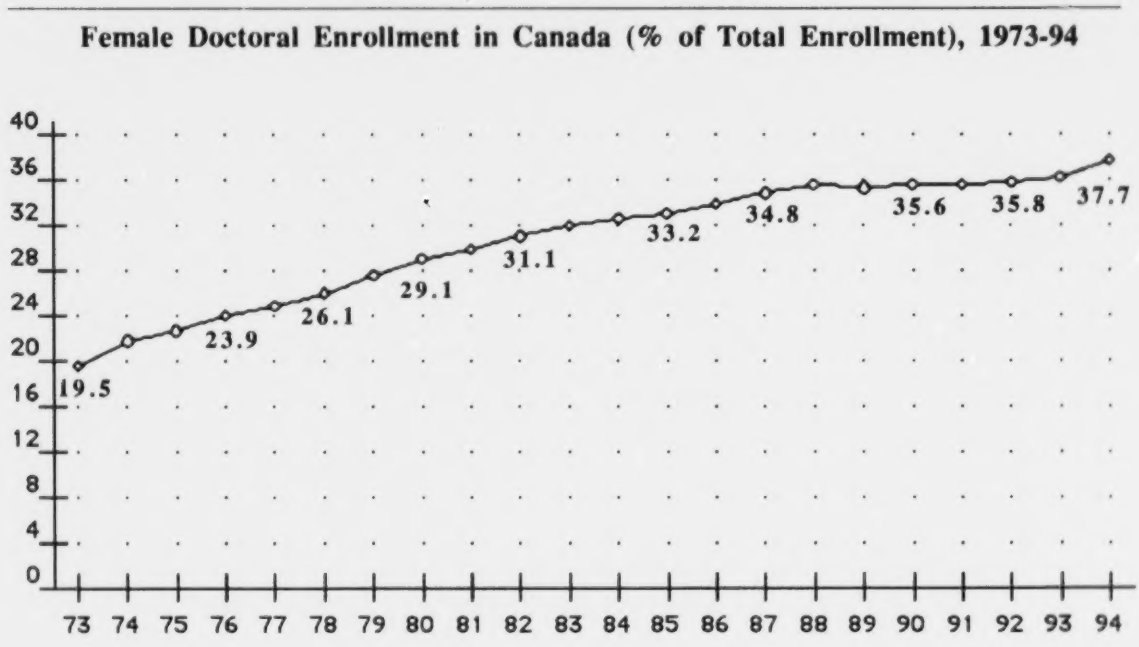

Figure 1. Female Doctoral Enrollment in Canada by Registration Status, as a Percent of Total Enrollment, 1973-1994.

Doctoral Degree Production

In addition to increased doctoral enrollments, women in both Canada and the US are currently earning a higher proportion of doctoral degrees than in previous years. In the United States, between 1920 and 1966, the percentage of women doctoral recipients ranged between 11% and 20% (Bowen and Rudenstine, 1992). Since 1966 this overall proportion has grown. In the mid-1980s, women represented about one third of earned doctorates in the US (Caplan, 1994) but since then this figure has risen only slightly. By 1992, of the 38,814 doctorates awarded in the United States that year, 63% (24,448) were awarded to men while only 37% (14,366) were awarded to women (Ries and Thurgood, 1993).

In Canada, the proportion of doctorates earned by women is lower than that of US women, having increased from less than 18% in 1977 to a little over 31% in 1992 (Table 1).

Table 1 Doctorates Awarded in Canada by Sex, 1977-1992
(Education in Canada, 1992.)

Year	Males	Females	Female %	Total
1977	1,396	306	17.98	1,702
1978	1,488	331	18.20	1,819
1979	1,434	369	20.47	1,803
1980	1,339	399	22.96	1,738
1981	1,384	436	23.96	1,820
1982	1,290	423	24.69	1,713
1983	1,370	451	24.77	1,821
1984	1,368	510	27.16	1,878
1985	1,473	528	26.39	2,001
1986	1,609	609	27.46	2,218
1987	1,702	682	28.61	2,384
1988	1,680	738	30.52	2,418
1989	1,791	782	30.39	2,573
1990	1,815	858	32.10	2,673
1991	2,017	930	31.56	2,947
1992	2,136	1000	31.89	3,136

Despite the gains made by women in recent years, enrollment patterns continue to reflect significant gender differences in various fields of study. Of the 5,582 doctorates awarded to all students in Canada in 1994 (Table 2), over 75% (4,482) were awarded in the life, natural and applied sciences where men enroll in greater numbers than women. Only 23% (1,370) of the total doctorates were awarded in the humanities and social sciences where women outnumber men (Canadian Association of Graduate Studies Statistical Report, 1994).

Table 2 Doctoral Degrees Awarded in Canada by Discipline, 1993-1994
(Canadian Association of Graduate Studies Statistical Report, 1994.)

Division	Number	Percent
Humanities	403	6.89
Social Sciences	967	16.52
Natural & Applied Science	1,148	19.62
Life Sciences	3,334	56.97
Total	5,852	100

In the United States, of the 20,908 doctorates awarded to men in 1987, 55% earned degrees in the physical and life sciences and only 25% earned doctorates in the humanities and social sciences (Figure 2). In contrast, of the 11,370 doctorates awarded to women, only 27% were awarded in the physical and life sciences while more than 67% were awarded in the humanities and social sciences. In 1987 women doctorates in education outnumbered men by more than 2 to 1. In 1993, while nearly 60% of US education doctorates went to women, only 9% of the engineering doctorates went to women (Thurgood and Clarke, 1995). In Canada, although undergraduate women have increased their presence significantly in traditional male-dominated fields, at the master's and doctoral levels, women continue to be underrepresented (Bellamy and Guppy, 1991).

In both Canada and the United States more doctorates are awarded annually to men than women, and women continue to earn doctorates at higher rates in education, the humanities and the social sciences, traditionally considered to be female fields of study. Despite women's increased representation in fields such as chemistry, engineering and computer science, women doctorates continue to be underrepresented in most traditional male fields of study.

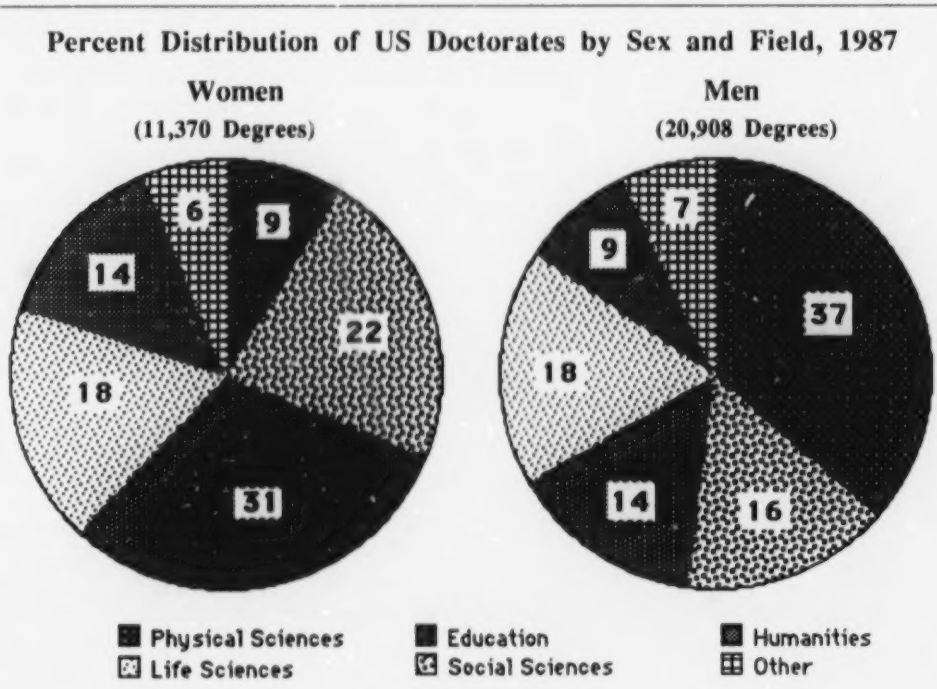

Figure 2. Percent Distribution of US Doctorates by Sex and Field, 1987 (Touchton and Davis, 1991).

Problems in Doctoral Degree Production

Two problems of concern to researchers in recent years have been the increased time required to complete a doctorate and the rate of attrition in doctoral programs. These trends affect degree production by both men and women. However, as will be discussed, women already face a number of challenges in degree production not experienced by men and therefore the implication of these trends may hold greater significance for degree completion by women.

Increased Time to Degree

Over the past several decades the length of time taken to complete the doctorate has been the focus of much research (Berelson, 1960; Baird, 1990). According to Berelson the length of time required to complete a degree remained quite stable between 1930 and 1960. However, based on their study which analyzed the Doctorate Records file of the National Research Council, Tuckman, Coyle and Bae (1989) have suggested that it is now taking longer to complete the doctoral degree than at any previous period in US history, a trend which is parallelled in Canadian higher education (Caplan, 1994; Yeats, 1991; Cude, 1988). In the US, between 1962 and 1992, the median registered time to degree[1] for doctoral recipients across all fields of study increased from 5.4 years to 7.1 years while the median total time to degree[2] increased from 8.8 years to 10.5 years (Ries and Thurgood, 1993, p. 23). In the cases of both registered and total time to degree, the increase represents nearly two additional years of schooling over the past thirty years. Given the burgeoning cost of higher education and ever increasing tuition rates, it is not unreasonable to wonder whether the need to supplement expenses with part-time employment is contributing to this increased time to degree.

The Canadian Association of Graduate Studies (1994) conducted an analysis of gender differences in length of time to completion in 30 of Canada's 55 doctoral granting institutions. Of the 4 academic divisions, only in the humanities did women take less time than men to complete their degrees. Women in the humanities took an average of 64.1 months to complete their degrees, compared to men who took an average of 68.3 months. In each of the remaining three divisions, social sciences, natural and applied sciences, and the life sciences, men completed their degrees more quickly than women. In the social sciences the difference was slight, averaging 61.8 month for men and 63.8 months for women. The difference in the life sciences was somewhat greater

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[1] The median registered time to degree includes the time actually enrolled in graduate school, including the master's degree.

[2] The median total time to degree is measured from the time a student registers for doctoral studies until the doctorate is received, including time not enrolled.

with men averaging 56.8 months compared to an average of 62 months for women. By far the greatest difference occurred in the natural and applied sciences where men completed their degrees in 54.7 months and women took an average of 64.1 months. That women in this study generally complete their degrees in the humanities more quickly than their male counterparts and take longer than men to complete their degrees in the natural, applied, and life sciences runs counter to the rather consistent findings in the US literature that students in the natural and life sciences finish more quickly than those in the humanities.

In a similar report that did not include an analysis of gender differences, but did include all 55 doctoral granting institutions in Canada, the findings were more typical of the those generally found in the US literature (Canadian Association of Graduate Studies, 1994). The longest completion times occurred in the humanities (62.2 months) and the social sciences (60.3 months) and the shortest completion times were in the life sciences (55.1 months) and the natural and applied sciences (53.9 months). The findings from this latter study are consistent with other Canadian studies (Yeats, 1991) and US studies (Baird, 1990; Tuckman, Coyle, and Bae, 1989) which generally show shorter times to completion in engineering and the physical, biological and life sciences, and longer times to completion in the humanities and social sciences. Further study is needed to explain the apparent contradictions reported between these two sets of data and to determine whether for women, the shorter time to completion in the humanities and longer time to completion in the natural and applied sciences is representative or whether, as Stricker (1994) has suggested, the longer time to degree reflects inherent differences in the nature of the disciplines.

Attrition in Doctoral Programs of Study

> The literature on graduate school attrition reveals two consistent patterns: women are more likely than men to drop out, and students of both sexes are more likely to fail to complete doctoral programs in the humanities and social sciences than in the physical sciences.
>
> (Patterson and Sells, 1973).

Historically, attrition at the doctoral level has not been viewed as an important issue; in fact, it has been quite the opposite. For years, doctoral attrition, reflected in the idea that 'only the best will survive' (Sternberg, 1981), has been understood by many to be normal, and even desirable, as part of the 'cooling out' process in graduate education. This 'cooling out' process is invoked through the use of broad admissions policies and then counterbalanced by the "slow killing-off of the lingering hopes of the most stubborn latent terminal students" (Clark, 1959, p 547).

More recently this approach has been called into question for two reasons. First, a 'survival of the fittest' model functions as a low quality substitute for weak and/or unstructured admissions policies. Second, there is a growing concern among researchers that the rate of attrition in doctoral programs, which in the US is estimated to be about 50% (Bowen and Rudenstine, 1992; Tinto, 1993), has reached an unacceptably high level. Given the rising cost of the doctorate and the declining resources available to both individuals and institutions, this 'survival of the fittest' model is increasingly vulnerable to criticism.

> In most countries, the more selective the level of education, the higher the rate of student completion. In the United States the reverse is true. The higher, the more selective, the level of education, the lower the rate of completion. In nonselective secondary schools of America, approximately 25 percent of all students fail to graduate. In more selective four-year colleges and universities, between 35 and 40 percent of entering students fail to obtain a degree. In the most selective institutions, the graduate and first-professional schools, our best estimates is [sic] that up to 50 percent of all beginning students fail to complete their doctoral degree programs (Tinto, 1993, p. 230).

Such claims give faculty, administrators and students good cause for concern. However, broad statistics, such as a 50% attrition rate, can have the effect of concealing more information than they reveal. This statistic does not make clear, for example, what differences in the rate of attrition that may exist in relation to variables such as field of study, gender or ethnicity. Despite a plethora of available statistical data on graduate education we know very little about those who leave doctoral programs prior to degree completion. In Canada, particularly, there is very little in the way of systematic data collection across institutions with respect to doctoral students, their programs and rates of completion or attrition (Cude, 1991; Holdaway, 1994).

A report by the Canadian Association of Graduate Studies (1994) examined the progress of the 1986 doctoral cohort across 30 of Canada's 55 doctoral granting institutions (Table 3). Across all academic divisions only 58.9% of the students had completed their doctorates after 7 years. When students who were still registered in their programs were excluded from these data the completion rate rose to 65.2%. These completion rates, by field of study, were comparable to US data with the lowest completion rates occurring in the humanities (43.2%) and social sciences (46.9%) and the highest completion rates occurring in the natural and applied sciences (73.5%) and the life sciences (73.7%). Since women enroll in greater numbers than men in disciplines with slower completion rates, and are underrepresented in disciplines with faster completion rates, it may be that the number of degrees produced by women is being affected adversely by differences attributable to particular fields of study (Astin and Malik, 1994; Dagg and Thompson, 1988).

Table 3 Status of 1986 Entering Doctoral Cohort in Canada by Division, 1994*
(Canadian Association of Graduate Studies Statistical Report, 1994)

Division	Total Cohort	Number Completed	% of Cohort Completed After 7 Years	% Completed Excluding Currently Enrolled Students
Humanities	438	189	43.2	48.1
Social Sciences	897	421	46.9	53.1
Natural & Applied Science	615	452	73.5	76.5
Life Sciences	589	434	73.7	83.8
Total	2,539	1,496	58.9	65.2

* These figures represent data from 30 of Canada's 55 doctoral granting institutions.

These data illustrate that, although enrollment and degree production by women doctoral students have increased in both Canada and the United States, fewer women than men complete doctorates in most academic disciplines and women generally take longer than men to complete their degrees (Canadian Association of Graduate Studies, Statistical Report, 1994; Ploskonka, 1993; Thurgood and Clarke, 1995). These trends are occurring despite the fact that "in terms of academic achievement, women demonstrate equal if not superior performance levels" (Bellamy and Guppy, 1991, p. 174). Women have higher grade-point averages than men (Baird, 1976; Solmon, 1976), they score slightly higher than men on the verbal portion of the Graduate Record Exam, and, on average, score higher or the same as men on virtually every objective measure (Simeone, 1987). If women's abilities are at least equal to those of men, why are fewer women completing doctorates and why are they taking longer than men to complete their degrees? In view of these seemingly contradictory indicators, these statistical data do little to explain why these trends might be occurring.

Women's shrinking numbers as they progress through doctoral programs is not solely a problem that begins in graduate school; nor is it one that ends at graduation. That women are treated differently than men is a process that begins with early childhood socialization practices that reinforce different competencies and role expectations for girls and boys and these different expectations follow women through the academy into their professional careers.

The Leaking Pipeline

When women do complete the doctorate there is strong evidence to indicate their careers will not flourish to the same degree as men's careers (Clark and Corcoran, 1986).

> As faculty, women are segregated in the tasks they perform, the places they teach, the fields they occupy, and the ranks they hold. Across each dimension (task, place, position) women receive lower rewards (Fox, 1985).

Women doctoral recipients are more likely than men to face a higher rate of unemployment (Tuckman and Tuckman, 1984); they are less likely than men to be hired by academic institutions (Dagg and Thompson, 1988); when they are hired they are more likely to be found in medium- and lower ranked graduate institutions (Feldman, 1974; Fox, 1995); and across all ranks, they tend to be paid less than men (Caplan, 1994). In the US and Canada, the proportion of women faculty being hired in universities remains smaller than the proportion of women doctoral recipients (Caplan, 1994). Women who do find employment in academic institutions are more likely to be employed in part-time and non-tenure track positions where they generally carry a greater load of undergraduate teaching responsibilities than men, have fewer benefits, less job security, and fewer opportunities, including time and access to financial resources and clerical help to conduct their research (Fox, 1995). Even in predominantly female disciplines, women faculty are not well represented. In Canada, two-thirds of the graduate students in education are women but women represent only 26.5% of the faculty; in social work where the majority of students is also women, 61% of the faculty and 91% of the full professors are male (Caplan, 1994).

In both the US and Canada, women's numbers decrease significantly as they progress through the academic ranks. Women represent a much smaller percentage of tenure-track faculty than men (Dagg and Thompson, 1988) and they hold significantly fewer positions in the higher administrative ranks of the academy (Bellamy and Guppy, 1991). In the US in 1991, women represented 47% of all instructors, 40% of assistant professors, 28% of associate professors, and only 15% of all full professors (Fox, 1995).

This shrinking representation of women provides indisputable evidence of a 'leaking pipeline' for women (Caplan, 1994). A number of factors are suspect in contributing to this phenomenon including the male orientation of the academy, personal and social influences, and a number of institutional practices.

The Androcentric Academy

Historically, the academy was defined by men and organized around the male life-cycle. Women were excluded from and only later admitted to higher education solely for the purpose of meeting men's needs.

> ... Oberlin College enrolled men students who produced crops to help pay for their education. It became apparent, however, that a domestic labor force was necessary to clean, cook, launder, and mend clothes — and women students fit the bill. Once admitted, women students attended no classes on Mondays when they did laundry, and each day they cooked, waited on tables, and served meals. They were also regarded as a 'balance' to men's mental and emotional development, altogether duplicating the conventional role of women in the family (Conway, 1974 in Fox, 1995, p. 222).
>
> The shortage of male students and dwindling enrollments during the Civil War encouraged administrators to open their doors to female students (Graham, 1978 in Fox, 1995, p. 222).

In the United States, the post-war introduction of the G.I. Bill further advantaged men, largely to the exclusion of women, by financing a college education for one-third of the returning veterans. Only 3% of all veterans were women (Fox, 1995). And, prior to 1972 and the introduction of Title IX to the Education Amendments Act, women applicants were subject to blatant discriminatory admission practices: for example, a male applicant at Pennsylvania State University was five times more likely to be accepted than a female applicant (Fox, 1995). Attitudes and conventions, grounded in practices and traditions that favoured men, persist in the academy today. The years of graduate study and pre-tenure employment, during which scholars must give primary attention to their research, coincide precisely with women's most fertile child-bearing years and the academy continues to disadvantage women by failing to recognize their needs as different from those of men.

Personal and Social Factors Influencing Women's Progress

Gender Stereotyping

Childhood socialization practices reflect society's continuing endorsement of separate gender roles for boys and girls. Boys are more likely to be encouraged for their independence, exploration and achievement whereas girls are more likely to be rewarded for cooperative and nurturing behaviours and discouraged from active play and independent activities, either through premature or excessive intervention (Lips, 1995).

Educational practices in elementary and secondary schools also play a significant role in reinforcing gender stereotyping (Berg and Ferber, 1983; Hall and Sandler, 1982). Curriculum materials and activities often reflect boys as active doers and girls as passive, invisible or

incompetent; teachers tend to teach boys more than they do girls and are more likely to give boys individual instruction; boys tend to be rewarded and praised for academic performance whereas girls are more likely to be praised for their appearance and conduct; girls who are less compliant or who do not conform to traditional physical stereotypes of femininity are more likely to be viewed as less competent and are more likely to receive lower grades (Lips, 1995). Gender differences in mathematics performance, though not distinguishable in elementary children, become quite visible at the secondary level and are linked more closely to gendered patterns of socialization than to any ability differences that might be attributed to gender (Lips, 1995). Breslauer and Gordon (1989) have suggested that the reduced representation of graduate women in the life, natural and applied sciences is the result of a pattern that begins in elementary school when girls are less likely than boys to continue the study of science and mathematics as they enter secondary school. Lastly, unlike adolescent boys who grow up expecting that someone else will care for their needs and look after the home while they pursue educational and career goals, adolescent girls grow up knowing they must balance their roles as primary caregivers and homemakers with their desire for an education and that focusing on either will diminish opportunities for pursuing the other.

Social Class

Bellamy and Guppy (1991) have suggested that the influence of social class continues to play an important role in determining who attends university. They point out that in Canada, participation in higher education has always been greater for those who come from high-income families. Children of parents who have undergraduate degrees are three times more likely to attend university than those of parents without degrees. Evidence that social class may impact more strongly on the education of women than men is indicated by the over-representation of women in community colleges whose parents also tend to have lower levels of education.

Self-Selection

In addition to the social and economic barriers that influence women's decisions to seek higher education, there is also evidence to suggest that women have less confidence in their academic abilities and therefore may have reduced educational expectations of themselves in comparison to men (Baird, 1976; Hall and Sandler, 1982). Adler (1976) has suggested that a more stringent self-selective process may exist among women. She writes "women seem to share with men the belief that females are less competent and perhaps less able to undertake or succeed at professional work than are males" (p. 201). Adler further indicates that women frequently hold negative views of themselves as scholars, question their intellectual capabilities and perceive themselves as less capable than their male counterparts, and that therefore women are less likely to

seek graduate education or aspire to an academic career path. Kaplan (1982) also found that a more intensive self-selection process may influence women's educational decisions and suggested that this may explain in part the higher GPAs and academic scores often reported in the literature among women who choose to pursue higher degrees.

Role Conflict

Women also are likely to experience greater conflict than men in dealing with the role expectations society places on them to marry and raise a family. In the academy men with families are thought to be stable and mature, but women with families are considered to be less dedicated and less promising by faculty (Caplan, 1994; Feldman, 1973). This conflicting message and the demands placed on women's time in fulfilling the multiple responsibilities of academic scholarship and family cause undue emotional stress for women (Hite, 1985). Many women experience feelings of divided loyalty with regard to family and academic demands and often feel they must do twice as much and work twice as hard to achieve equal standing with their male counterparts. Bellamy and Guppy (1991) have observed that, in both the US and Canada, since the end of the Second World War, the ages at which women marry and have their first child are increasing. This would tend to suggest an increased interest on the part of women in advancing their education in preference to marriage and family. However, Baird (in Adler, 1976) found a larger proportion of females among older students than among younger students. Both these indictors may reflect the double-duty burden that women experience in attempting to raise a family and pursue their education.

Age Discrimination

Older women applicants to graduate school find that they are accepted less frequently than younger applicants and often they are asked to justify their reasons for wanting to pursue graduate study as older students (Kaplan, 1982). Kaplan also reported that older women are less likely to apply for financial aid in the fear that doing so will diminish the likelihood of their acceptance and they are less likely to receive research assistantships. However, women, regardless of age, are less likely to receive research assistantships and more likely to receive a larger share of teaching assistantships (Solmon, 1976). Older graduate women students who had raised families and had held responsible jobs were less likely to experience feelings of respect normally accorded those with good employment histories and a majority (82%) of older students reported that they did not have collegial relationships with faculty (Feldman, 1974). Older women who pursue graduate education often find it difficult to be taken seriously and they are frequently discouraged by patronizing attitudes directed toward them through overt and covert behaviours (Hall and Sandler,

1982). Despite these kinds of experiences, Kaplan (1982) found that most older women were seriously committed to their education and concerned with achieving competence in their field.

Institutional Practices Influencing Women's Progress

A number of institutional practices serve to influence, either directly or indirectly, the progress of women. Among the most influential factors are those related to research funding and financial support, the departmental climate and advisor/advisee relationships.

Research Funding and Financial Support

In recent years the availability of funding for higher education in Canada has been influenced by two major factors (Slaughter and Skolnik, 1987). The first was the passing of the Federal-Provincial Fiscal Arrangements and Established Programs Financing Act in 1977 which resulted in the decline of the real per student expenditures for postsecondary education. The second factor has been the slowed economic growth in most provinces that resulted in half the provinces spending less on postsecondary education than they were receiving in transfer payments from the federal government.

In addition to the general reduced funding of universities by the federal government, the distribution of research money through the three major funding agencies, the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC), the National Sciences and Engineering Research Council (NSERC), and the Medical Research Council (MRC) is disproportionate to the enrollment across fields of study. In Canada, more students and more women enroll in the social sciences, humanities and education. About 60% of all university researchers in Canadian universities work in the social sciences, yet the humanities and social science divisions receive only 12% of the total federal funds available through the three federal councils (Yeats, 1991). The distribution of financial resources to specific fields such as mathematics and engineering potentially limits the financial resources available to women since they enroll in these fields in much smaller numbers (Ploskonka, 1993). The gendered nature of the academy is perpetuated through these practices by male-dominated funding agencies and through practices that consistently promote men's work in research journals and ignore women's concerns (Dagg and Thompson, 1988). It is through these mechanisms that men continue to define the subjects that are acceptable to study and which methods of research are preferred, and frequently, women's activities and beliefs are excluded and/or judged to be inferior when they differ from what is commonly accepted practice.

Similarly, in the US, more than half the doctoral students in the physical and life sciences and in engineering reported that university sources provided the primary means of financial support (Ries and Thurgood, 1993). Berg and Ferber (1983) found that although men and women in the sciences were equally likely to receive financial support, those in the sciences were far more likely than those in education to receive assistantships and fellowships. They also found that the graduation rate was substantially higher for those who received assistantships and fellowships than for those who did not receive such awards. Given that adequate financial resources also have been directly linked to improved time to degree (Baird, 1990; Nerad and Cerny, 1993) the funding practices associated with various disciplines may explain, in part, the longer times to degree in the humanities and social sciences and hence, for women.

Furthermore, even when funding is directed toward the female fields of study women are less likely to benefit. For example, in 1985-86, the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada funded 797 research projects with more than $24 million, but only 8% of these awards involved primarily individual women or women as a class (Dagg and Thompson, 1988).

Lack of adequate funding causes students considerable anxiety (Vartuli, 1982) and may influence registration status (part-time versus full-time enrollment) and employment patterns among women graduate students. Not surprisingly, Gillingham, Seneca and Taussig (1991) found that increasing the number of hours spent on academic work decreases the time to degree and conversely that decreasing the number of hours spent on academic work increases the time to degree. Women who must seek part-time employment necessarily have fewer hours available to devote to academic work. Although increased debt loads that students incur through accumulated loans also are thought to contribute to doctoral students withdrawing from their programs prematurely Stager (1989) women doctoral students are more likely than men to be self-supporting (Ries and Thurgood, 1993) and those who seek part-time employment may run a greater risk of increasing their time to degree.

Institutional and Departmental Climate

The importance of the learning climate on women's feelings of positive self-regard and educational progress has received much attention in recent years (Hall and Sandler, 1982). There is strong evidence to indicate that sexual harassment continues unabated in graduate education and that women doctoral students are more likely to experience harassment than master's level students (Morris, 1989). Hall and Sandler (1982) documented a range of attitudes and behaviours that create an unfriendly climate for women, undermine their confidence, sap their motivation, dampen their academic and career aspirations and, ultimately, impede their progress. Faculty attitudes were

found to have a profound effect on women. They found that men faculty tend to view women primarily as sexual beings and tend to affirm male students more often than women students and that this often has the effect of reinforcing negative stereotypes held by male students. Furthermore, the use of sexist language serves to perpetuate these sexist thoughts and beliefs (Black, 1989). The lack of encouragement from both male faculty and peers, the lack of collegial relationships with faculty members, and stereotyped views that hold women to be less competent than men academically, all contribute to the stress experienced by women (Berg and Ferber, 1983; Hite, 1985). Lipschutz (1993) has suggested that, for too many students, racism, sexism and humiliation characterize students' encounters with faculty. The decreasing representation of women as they progress through academic ranks is thought to be symptomatic of these discriminatory practices within higher education (Hanson, 1992).

Evidence of the pervasiveness of this deferential treatment of women graduate students was reported 25 years ago when Creager (in Holmstrom and Holmstrom, 1974) found that more women than men had considered withdrawing from graduate school and that a larger proportion of women than men reported that the absence of emotional support and encouragement had caused them considerable stress that interfered with the completion of their graduate work. In their own large-scale study, Holmstrom and Holmstrom found that faculty availability and attitudes toward women were important factors in student satisfaction and performance and that 1 in 3 women doctoral students reported that the negative attitudes held by the faculty contributed to their emotional stress and decreased their commitment to remain in graduate school. Hite (1985, p. 21) reported that "women in all fields of study at the doctoral level perceived less support from faculty than did their male peers" and concluded that women may interpret this lack of support as evidence that faculty perceive women as not having the ability or motivation to succeed academically and that these perceptions serve to discourage women unnecessarily. She further recommended that the "informal and formal policies of graduate schools and individual programs of study need to be reevaluated for signs of intentional and unintentional biases against female students" (p. 21).

Mentoring and Advisor/Advisee Relationships

Women doctoral students' interactions with faculty, particularly their advisors, can have a significant impact on their feelings of well-being, their academic progress and their production after graduation (Heinrich, 1990).

Phillips-Jones (1982, in LeCluyse, Tollefson and Borgers, 1985, p. 411) defined a mentor as an "influential person in the student's graduate program who significantly helps the

student reach a major goal". Lipschutz (1993) further distinguishes between advising and mentoring suggesting that offering academic information and counsel is characteristic of advising and that mentoring extends beyond these activities to include behaviours such as providing timely and constructive feedback, conveying respect for students' ideas, demonstrating concern for their professional welfare and treating students as colleagues rather than apprentices. Defined as such, Lipschutz suggests that mentoring involves activities like publishing, developing grant proposals, presentation of conference papers, conducting workshops and helping students to obtain academic positions. "The mentor acts as a guide, teacher, critic, and sponsor" (Braun, 1990, p. 192). Tinto (1993) has suggested that the role of the mentor may be particularly critical during the final writing stages of the doctorate.

> Consequently, persistence at this stage may be highly idiosyncratic in that it may hinge largely if not entirely upon the behavior of a specific faculty member (Tinto, 1993, p. 237).

And indeed, Tluczek's (1995) findings support Tinto's argument. Although her study was not restricted to women, Tluczek found that a poor relationship with one's advisor and insufficient structure during the dissertation phase were among the six primary obstacles to completing the dissertation. Since women "are much less likely than their male classmates to feel confident about their preparation for and ability to do graduate work" (Hall and Sandler, 1982, p. 10) the opportunity for such a mentoring relationship may be that much more critical to women's success.

However, for women, such mentoring relationships are rare (Heinrich, 1991). The small number of women faculty who are available to mentor graduate women means that women are far less likely than men to have a same-sex mentor and receive the kind of encouragement and support they need to progress academically and professionally (Breslauer and Gordon, 1989). Braun (1990) found that having a same-sex mentor was far more important to women than to men.

> The men have grown up together, have played, learned, and competed together. They share certain language, traditions, and understandings .... When these professionals choose protégés or apprentices, they look to fledglings in whom they can see a reflection of themselves .... Thus, in an organization that operates by way of sponsorship and support, the women students are more likely to be left to struggle on their own (Fox, 1995, p. 229).

However, for some students, the nature of the mentoring relationship may be more important to women's progress than the actual gender of the mentor. Heinrich (1991) identified three approaches to mentoring relationships which she characterized along lines of gender. A masculine approach to mentoring was characterized as high in task orientation with a tendency to handle conflict by direct confrontation. A feminine approach to mentoring was characterized by an over-emphasis on the interpersonal dimensions of the relationship and the avoidance of conflict at

all costs. A preferred approach to mentoring, described as androgynous, was characterized by a balance between the task and interpersonal dimensions of the relationship as well as a sensitive approach to the use of power for the benefit of the student rather than the advisor. Heinrich found that women who had relationships with androgynous mentors felt professionally affirmed and were more productive after graduation.

Braun (1990) found that some advisor/advisee relationships can result in a number of negative outcomes for both advisor and advisee. Relationships that become destructive or exploitive can act as powerful inhibitors to women's academic and career progress. Lipschutz (1993) recommends giving mentoring equal weight with teaching and research and ongoing evaluation of mentors to remedy some of these problems.

In summary, a number of factors have been found to influence women's doctoral experiences — factors that may increase the length of time required to complete the doctorate and diminish women's persistence and, ultimately, their progress through the ranks of the academy. However, as researchers, we know very little about the way in which complex personal and social factors interact with institutional practices to shape women's doctoral experiences.

Understanding Doctoral Persistence

To address some of the *why* questions about attrition and increased time to degree, educational theorists have attempted to develop models that might be useful in predicting doctoral persistence. Most noteworthy is the work of Girves and Wemmerus (1988) and Tinto (1993). In highlighting a research agenda for the 90s and beyond, Tinto calls for a range of studies that "empirically document the scope and varying character of the graduate persistence process" (p. 241). In particular, he calls for longitudinal studies that examine persistence across different stages of graduate study; studies of institutional behaviour; studies to examine the 'nested effects' of faculty-student interaction and the role of advisor/advisee relationships; studies to examine the differential effects of 'field of study' on graduate persistence, both within and across institutions; studies to examine the influence of personal factors on graduate persistence; and studies to examine the influence of institutional behaviour and policies.

Tinto (1993) stresses the need for studies that employ both quantitative and qualitative methods of inquiry. He suggests that quantitative research is necessary to develop longitudinal studies which track and link student experiences to eventual outcomes and to enable researchers to make generalizations that are applicable to other populations as well as institutions. However, he

argues just as strongly for the need for qualitative studies. He suggests that strategies to improve degree completion rates and to develop useful models for predicting doctoral degree persistence must be based on something more substantive than "informed speculation". They must emerge from an understanding of the graduate experience as it is understood by doctoral students themselves. Qualitative methods "are needed to probe the meanings differing individuals attach to their experiences ... [and] ... more than any set of longitudinal path equations, help us to make sense of why it is that particular types of experiences lead to differing types of outcomes" (Tinto, p. 243). The voices of students, particularly those of women, have been notably absent from the research literature on doctoral education and the current study has been designed with this in mind.

The Study in Progress

This paper focuses on some of the primary themes emerging from a study currently in progress which examines the nature of women's doctoral experiences and the meanings women attach to these experiences. The study is intended to advance our understanding of the factors that contribute to persistence in women who pursue the doctorate. It has been designed to simulate an open-ended interview process that would encourage and support women who wanted to share their reflections about their doctoral experiences.

In December 1994, I posted a request to the Women's Studies electronic discussion list inviting doctoral students and their partners who might be interested in writing to me about their experiences to participate in the study. In all, 55 people responded to the request, of which 46 were women. Other respondents included partners of women doctoral students and male doctoral students. Five women withdrew very early in the study, primarily due to other commitments and lack of time and six others who intended to write more extensively also did not continue to write. More recently I invited one woman to participate after reading a post she made to another list describing some aspects of her doctoral experience. Of the 35 who have written more extensively, 9 women have focused intensely on their experiences and their individual communication with me averages 100 single-space typed pages. Electronic mail provides the primary method of communication. Generally the women seem to be comfortable communicating through electronic mail. Only three women expressed some concern about the privacy of the electronic medium and two of them have chosen to share some of their experiences through written communications via regular surface mail. One woman took the initiative to verify my connection to the university by telephoning and leaving a message for me in my department office; she was satisfied that I was who I claimed when I sent her a response by electronic mail asking about the nature of her inquiry. Printed, single-spaced, my correspondence with all 55 respondents fills four 3 inch binders.

In my initial contacts with each of the women we discussed the nature of the study and their participation as well as processes for maintaining the confidentiality of their identities and the privacy of their communications. Following these preliminary formalities I shared with them five broadly focused questions as a way to help them to begin describing their experiences:

1. I would like to know what motivated you to do a doctorate ... why you wanted to do the degree in the first place.

2. I'd like to know a little about your background ... how you came to be oriented to your field of study.

3. Regarding your expectations of the doctoral experience, if you think back to the days before you entered your doctoral program, can you describe what the degree represented to you then and what you thought the process would be like?

4. Now that you have progressed to the point you are in your program, in what ways have your views about the degree and the degree process changed?

5. Please describe, in as much detail as possible, the story of your doctoral experience, giving particular attention to the critical events and challenges you have faced and the way in which these events have influenced your academic, professional and personal development.

As each of the women has written to me I have read and responded to their notes, asking questions to probe for additional information, either in the details of the events they described or in their reflections about their experiences, and to seek further clarification of my understandings. This is a continuing process.

Very early in our correspondence some of the women expressed curiosity about who I was and what my personal interest was in conducting the study and I openly shared this information with them answering any questions they put forward. Other women seemed less curious about me and my motivations and have been more intensely focused on telling their own stories.

About the Women in the Study

Of the 46 original women respondents, 10 had completed doctorates with 6 receiving their degrees in 1994. Thirty-five women are currently registered in doctoral programs in the United States and one is registered in Canada. All have completed their candidacy exams, have defended successfully the preliminary oral examination, and are actively engaged in the dissertation writing phase of the doctorate. None of the women had pursued degrees in non-traditional fields of study; all have pursued doctorates in the arts, humanities and social sciences. Among the participants are single heterosexual women, single mothers, married women with children and grandchildren, married women without children, and two woman who identified themselves as lesbians.

In their stories women describe a range of experiences in connection with their doctorates; some are self-affirming; others fall outside the normal bounds of human decency. Among the 15 women who have written most extensively about their experiences, despite their concerns and self-doubts, as best I can tell, I am convinced that each one of them is a 'finisher'. Most are goal oriented and persistent, some to the point of stubbornness; they are willing to sacrifice other important personal needs and to work hard to achieve their goals. Generally they see themselves as capable individuals willing to "risk oneself at something that is important".

Their reasons for pursuing the doctorate are surprisingly similar. Most often women connect pursuit of the doctorate with their personal development. They talk about their own joy for learning, reading, and writing and they see the doctorate as both a challenge and an opportunity to extend their learning, to prove their own worth to themselves and others, and to gain a personal sense of achievement. Only secondarily do they think of the degree in terms of career or professional advancement.

> I pursued a doctorate because I wanted to see if I could do it - that is handle the intellectual challenge. I also wanted to push/improve my thinking skills. I did not pursue the doctorate for "career advancement". If I can pursue a career in Psychology - great, if not, I'm personally fulfilled with the idea that "I did it".

But despite the confidence in their abilities that led them to pursue the degree, all the women describe experiencing serious self-doubts during their program.

> The self-doubts ... the feelings .... The feelings were "queasies" and "nags" that rumbled around my head at all times. The behaviors — hesitancy in the classroom — resistance at being an *active* part of what was going on in this learning context — *fear* (that is perhaps the best descriptor of the feeling part of this) of "exposing myself" as less than my colleagues — diluting the statements I made in papers, exams, and in the classroom; not making the strong assertive statements I would have like to have made for fear I would put myself out on this limb only to watch it get sawed off from under me.

The Challenges Facing Women Doctoral Students

The doctorate represents more than just another degree. It represents a way of life, and for women, the socialization process along this path is intimately connected with one's inner sense of self. The doctorate is as much a process of 'becoming' as it is one of achievement. As we begin to integrate our 'self' in this process, we are inclined to reflect, not only on the nature of the doctoral experience and the protocols that guide the process, but on our own abilities, proclivities and tolerances that necessarily will bound the process. This self-questioning is not the sole prerogative of women. The drive to evaluate one's own abilities has been well articulated by Festinger (1954, p. 118): *in the absence objective, non-social measures* individuals will tend to evaluate their own abilities through social comparison with others. Because the doctoral experience is highly

individualized and idiosyncratic by nature (Tinto, 1993), because important feedback from faculty is often vague or lacking altogether, and because women, historically, have been socialized to question and second guess their own abilities, we may be more sensitized and therefore more vulnerable to perceived discrepancies in our evaluations. As we attempt to accurately assess our own abilities, the questioning of self, and of the doctoral process, become inextricably connected. We are driven to understand how we fit into the process and how we are being changed by it. It is through this questioning of ourselves that we come to question the process.

What is the nature of the doctoral process?
What are the guidelines ?
Who do I trust?
Who will I become?

These are the fundamental questions of process to which the 'self' is connected. However, behind the answers to these questions lie the hidden rules and secret agendas of the graduate experience that can have a profound influence on women's likelihood of finishing and on the self they take with them after graduate school.

The Secret Agenda: Education or Initiation?

It is a rare individual who embarks on the doctorate without a focus on successful completion of the degree. Some students withdraw prior to completion and, ultimately, some students are failed in the process of defending their work. Why and how such failures occur, particularly during the latter stages of the degree, is a concern and a mystery to many students. Some enter the process with the implicit understanding that students aren't supposed to reach the final defense until the dissertation is almost assured of passing. But as students we have heard the horror stories of those who fail to cross the finish line in those final moments. Fortunately, most among us will not have to endure such events as a lived experience. Ours are travesties of a more diminutive nature, though they may seem no less horrific at the time. However, the defense endures as a caricature of the doctoral experience. It represents the last hurdle prior to one's official induction into the inner sanctum of academe. And although the meaning of this event may change as one progresses through various stages of the degree, the defense serves as symbolic proof of one's worth as a researcher. It is the culminating event in a long series of tests in which candidates must demonstrate and defend their accomplishments and offer evidence of their ability to interact with members of the academy as professional colleagues.

... defense ... evidence ... proof ...

The very language of the doctorate is one that is competitive, combative and judgmental. It is the language of the courts; of judges and juries. What message does this language convey? How could we *not* be suspicious about the nature of the process?

> The final oral defense was more than a little undermining to my self confidence. The professor that had served as my mentor and for whom I had worked for so many years really grilled me. It was more than a "normal" grilling. I couldn't even understand the questions she was asking .... the chair of my committee later told me that he, too, was unable to understand what she was asking, yet he offered no help or support during the grueling oral defense. It took me several weeks to regain myself after the defense.

What was this student's understanding of the purpose of the final defense? Given the 'grilling' she describes, what were the views of her committee members of her work and of this process? Did they enter into the defense with the understanding that her work was of sufficient academic rigor to warrant a pass? If so, what was the purpose of the 'grilling' that she and other students have described? Is it conceivable that her committee would have allowed her to defend had they not believed she was adequately prepared? Or, as one student suggests, is this "merely a form of hazing? Everyone else with a Ph.D. did it this way, by god you will too!"

What is the intended purpose of the dissertation and the defense? The stated agenda often describes it as a learning experience in which the student demonstrates a unique contribution to knowledge. We call this education. However, in both language and practice there is much evidence to suggest that the secret agenda is, in fact, a sorting game (Lang, 1987) — a process intended to sort the wheat from the chaff; and depending on the inclinations of faculty and committee members, it is a process that can at times feel more like an initiation than education.

The Hidden Rules

The explicit rules that guide students through the doctoral process are written in program guidelines, calendars and university policy statements. If these guidelines are broad in scope, they can, in a climate of caring and mutual trust, work to the benefit of both students and faculty by providing flexibility in responding to the unique needs of individual students.

> I escaped a lot of red tape and written how-to's because the program was so new .... It will graduate its second and third Ph.D.'s this spring. The people I work with, and who have been so supportive of me, are the ones who shaped, birthed the program. So in a way, my "success" — completion — seems to me to be an affirmation of their project.

Guidelines that are overly restrictive can reduce the flexibility of faculty and departments and may tend to promote standardized responses to students' individual needs. Taken in the extreme, such guidelines may even appear to give priority to protecting faculty interests rather than serving the student's need to know.

> The student's 'how-to' manual (procedures, forms, etc.) for getting through the Ph.D. has grown significantly since I entered the program. Partly, this is a reaction to a grievance filed by a student who failed his comprehensive exams, partly the reaction of one particular Ph.D. student who wants EVERYTHING in writing. So, as time goes on, more and more time-lines, lines of authority, forms, approvals, official notification, are built into the process. I pretty much felt my way through, counted on people to be flexible, counted on the program to take my particular needs into account. I don't know that the writing down of every minute step of the process will limit the department's ability to be flexible, but I suspect it will.

Doctoral education by its nature, is a highly individualized experience and more often than not, the procedural guidelines in university calendars are subject to broad interpretation.

> Usually, in my program, the exams occur anytime after you've completed the bulk of the coursework agreed to by your committee. Some people still take a few classes afterward. I would say that the average seems to be to take the exams sometime during your third year in the program. Ostensibly, you should go into exams with a proposal, although the "proposal" could be no more than a basic outline of what you think you will be doing for your dissertation. Then, once you're done with the exams, you can start gathering data for your research. However, as probably happens everywhere, there are more exceptions to these guidelines than there are guidelines. I know of students who had basically completed their research before doing exams. I know students who had no clue what their dissertation would be, but took the exams anyway. You get the idea.

Students can attend the same classes and share the same advisor, and just as no two students' experiences will be alike, there is no certainty that a given professor will follow the same procedural process with all advisees. Seeking advice from peers is therefore not always helpful and often students are left to their own avails to understand the subtleties and nuances of the various ways in which the guidelines and the doctoral process are applicable to their own circumstances. At best this uncertainty about the range of available options and other's expectations can increase students' feelings of stress and may cause them to question their own abilities.

> My advisor took a very different approach with me than he did with most of his other advisees .... Where two of his other [male] advisees were giving him periodic outlines of what their research would be, I was developing whole chapters. I remember bitching at my friend once, saying "Why is he making me do chapters when you get to turn in outlines?"

And *in the absence of objective, non-social measures* by which to evaluate her own abilities this student sought understanding through social comparison with her peers. In a climate of trust and mutual caring this self-exploration is a safe and healthy activity. In climates where trust and mutual respect are in short supply, one's confidence can be easily threatened.

The Cat Guarding the Cream

Women in this study describe five ways in which faculty relate to students: there are faculty who want to help students find their own voice and discover their own relationship to research; there are faculty who want to shape students in their own image; there are faculty who are too busy with their own agendas to even notice the students (unless they happen to share similar research interests); there are faculty who are expressly hostile and vindictive toward students; and there are faculty who use students to serve their own private agendas.

> Within the classroom environment the faculty was typically more concerned with "shaping" the student to his/her particular mindset and belief system than he/she was with allowing for and stimulating critical thinking and discussion among the students.

The question of whose agenda is being served by higher education, the students' or the professors' is a controversy that has been festering in the halls of academe since the turn of the century (Berelson, 1960). The issue of whether universities are teaching institutions or research institutions, whether scholarly or professional interests should prevail, need not be framed as a dichotomy. Both purposes serve important individual and societal needs. However, current reward structures pay slight regard to the value of teaching and little, if any, attention is given to understanding theories of instructional practice. Doctoral programs continue to produce graduates who have little or no practical classroom experience and tomorrow's students are not likely to be any better prepared than the professors who fail them now.

That faculty serve as gatekeepers of the sacred grove is rather like inviting the cat to guard the cream (Huber, 1992). We might ask whose agenda is being served when faculty compete among themselves at the expense of students and then, in the absence of any genuine scrutiny, seek sanctuary in some tacit set of criteria by which they induct those deemed worthy into the inner sanctum.

> One thing I do remember my advisor saying was that a lot of what would transpire in the room during the orals would have nothing to do with me. In effect, it would be the faculty members trying to impress one another — possibly at my expense. He warned me that there would probably be at least one or two times that a faculty member would ask me a question, not because he wanted me to answer, but because he wanted to ask it in front of the other faculty members. He said he would probably even do that himself.

> So there I was in the orals. Just me and five guys. At Midwestern U, a faculty rep sits in along with the committee; the faculty rep is allowed to ask questions and gets a copy of the written answers in advance. But mostly, the rep is supposed to be there to ensure that the exam is fair. Except that my faculty rep appeared to have some sort of ax to grind. He definitely had some sort of agenda and asked some fairly bizarre questions that I did my best to deal with .... The committee members sort of engaged each other, too, and so there were a few minutes when it appeared more like a conversation than a test. I'd been told that might happen, and that it was a good sign if it did — it would mean that the faculty weren't too worried about my ability to "be one of them" and thus didn't feel the need to grill me.

This academic rendition of 'King of the castle' takes many forms, some more subtle than others. The idealist in me would believe that one of the primary functions of faculty is to serve as role models for students and that common sense or at least some fundamental sense of propriety would guide faculty in their relationships with colleagues and students. And while I continue to adhere to this idealism, the stories recounted by women demonstrate repeatedly whose agenda is really being served — and too frequently it has little to do with either research or students' well being.

One student described her experience of being "bounced around like a ping pong ball" between two committee members who had conducted research together for more than 20 years, each of whom expressed very different and contradictory expectations regarding her work. She recounted a graduate seminar in which one of these committee members told the following story for her benefit:

> Suppose you've worked with a colleague for a very long time, and you've come to a point in your collegial relationship where you see things very differently. But, your professional relationship doesn't allow you to "fight it out" with your colleague. What do you do? Suddenly, one day you realize that there is another mechanism at your disposal. You have a student in common. So, you wage your battles using *her* . You have her running between the two of you, you have her dancing like a puppet on a string, but you get your point across to the colleague.

That committee members might hold differing views with regard to student work may not be unusual or generally even suspect. However, the way in which this faculty member used the student to further a personal agenda with his colleague was flagrantly unethical. In this case the student's response was to go directly to the chair of her committee, recount the story to him, and serve notice that she expected him to assume a leadership role and work out his professional difficulties with his colleague, and that she *did not* expect their personal difficulties to impinge on her progress any further.

> From that day on I had no further problems with the other committee member. But, the hell I went through until I *discovered* the hidden agenda ... the game-playing and politics of higher ed are sometime nauseating, stress inducing and downright *mean* to the student!!!"

In one respect, this student was more fortunate than many women who face similar experiences. The faculty member's candid admission provided evidence the student needed to confront the issue directly. As unpleasant as that was, the alternative, when these agendas remain hidden, causes students unending emotional stress. While overt and covert sanctions exist for students, rarely are there are sanctions for faculty who may harbour ill will toward a student and/or conduct their duties and responsibilities in less than an honourable way.

When doctoral experiences aren't as they should be, when student/faculty relationships go wrong and exceed the bounds of mutual trust and respect, students often feel powerless to confront problems which in more equitable relationships they would never allow to continue. For women students who, by virtue of the inferior position bestowed upon us by our gender (Schaeff, 1985, p. 27), are seen to occupy the very lowest strata in the academic hierarchy, this can be a double wounding. It is this breaking of the trust that so diminishes the spirit and dissolves one's motivation. With whom can we share our most precious self, and trust that we will not be diminished in the process? Can those who are the gatekeepers also be our mentors?

Advisor/Advisee Relationships

The relationship that a student has with an advisor is undoubtedly one of the most critical factors in a student's progress, particularly, as Tinto (1993) has suggested, during the latter stages of the degree. Advisors can either make or break a student depending, in part, on whether they view their primary role as one of gatekeeper or mentor. Many students describe experiencing a high level of stress when they have wanted or have been forced to change advisors either because the relationship had deteriorated to an unworkable state or because the advisor simply wasn't available. Even the initial act of choosing an advisor can be problematic. Fish (1993) has suggested that one of the problems connected with the early stages of mentoring is that students lack sufficient knowledge of their institution and have not yet developed a sense of their own position in relation to their department.

> ... there were no real guidelines [about how we should select an advisor]. We knew that, in theory, we were supposed to finalize our choice of advisors by the end of the first or second quarter, and that we were supposed to have a committee formed by the end of the second quarter (although how they expected us to know who to put on a committee when we didn't even know what we would take, and in many instances didn't know what our dissertation topic would be by that time, is beyond me).

If completing the doctorate were not sufficiently challenging, women students, who occupy the lowest station in the academic hierarchy, must also learn the delicate art of negotiating a meaningful relationship with those in the academy who are far more practiced in their craft and who ultimately wield the power. The women in this study shared their experiences with this process as the advisor/advisee association develops into a more collegial relationship.

Developmental Stages in Advisor/Advisee Relations

1. Follow the Leader

In the early stages of students' relationship with advisors, the differences in levels of knowledge and the power differences in their academic stations can seem enormous in the eyes of

students. Students may see themselves as advisees who are willing to be led or guided and may view the advisor as an authority figure — as gatekeeper and all-seeing judge. There is a feeling that nothing one does could ever match the level of expertise of one's advisor.

> It took time. I didn't know what to expect from him for the longest time. I viewed him as sort of this all-seeing judge, as well as a major gatekeeper. He was a judge in that he ALWAYS edited everything with a fine-tooth comb .... In the beginning, especially, he seemed hyper-critical. I began to wonder (and dread) whether anything I developed would ever be good enough for him.

This student went on to describe the difficulty she was having getting her advisor to agree to any of the dissertation topics she put forth, even though she was very excited about them and how, following meetings with her advisor, she would often go back to the library to review issues he thought important, and how she would again research some point that she felt uncertain about.

2. Fight or Flight: Digging in your Heels

The second stage of the relationship is one in which students begin to feel genuine ownership of their work. On one level it reflects the confidence students feel about their work and its relationship to the literature and research in their chosen fields. One woman describes a conversation in which a friend gave her the following advice:

> At some point you're just going to have to decide when to dig your heels in. There will come a time when you know that whatever it is that you're saying is what you want to say. You'll have to be ready to fight when that time comes.

And she interpreted this advice in the following way:

> Basically, what she meant was that I may well decide to accede to his wishes in terms of topics, or phrasing, or whatever; but at some point, I was going to have a topic, a model, an idea, or something like that that I was not willing to compromise, lose, or change. She believed that most advisors were really waiting for their advisees to get to the point where the advisee said, "No, this is what I mean, and this is why, and this is how I'm going to do it in the dissertation."

This transition can be difficult for women who often are neither comfortable with nor well practiced in using their voice to claim a position for themselves. Attempting to claim one's voice in the context of a relationship with one's advisor, especially when the advisor is a male, constitutes a shift in the one-up, one-down balance of the early advisor/advisee relationship. Schaef writes:

> ... relationships are conceived of as being either one-up or one down. In other words, when two people come together or encounter each other, the ... assumption is that one of them must be superior and the other must be inferior. There are no other possibilities (Schaef, 1985, p. 104).

As women, we know that many men are comfortable with this one-up, one-down relationship. To be peer with one's advisor is safe only when the advisor is also comfortable being peer with a

student. This presents a double bind when the student is also a woman. Women know this lesson only too well and often are reluctant to assume being peer with an advisor, even when confident about their work, unless advisors communicate in some way that they also are comfortable being peer with a student — and comfortable being peer with a woman.

3. From Advisor/Advisee to Colleagues

When women feel they are in control of the major aspect of their topic or study and when the message is received that it is safe to be peer with an advisor, rarely is there a reluctance to assume this new role in the relationship. Sharon writes:

> Little by little I began to realize that what he wanted was a challenge. He seemed to be waiting for me to not only find my voice but use it to fire stuff back at him.
>
> I did eventually get to the point where I dug my heels in, and let my advisor know that his ideas were interesting, but they didn't fit how I viewed the topic or the research, and so I was going to do it my way. In fact, one day he literally grilled me about why I was using such and such a model, why so and so as grounding points, etc. He kept it up for about 30 minutes, and I was able to come back at him each time with a sound reason as to why I wanted to use a certain model, literature, etc. He sat back then and said "You're ready to go." Meaning that I was ready to really start doing the research .... After that conversation, everything changed. It was more like I started to become a colleague, and less like an advisee who needed to be led through the process.

Not all the advisor/advisee relationships that women describe follow this same pattern; however, only one women described her relationship with her advisor as one in which she was accepted from the beginning as a colleague and her doctoral experiences generally have been much more positive and self-affirming than those described by other women.

The Gendered Nature of Advisor/Advisee Relationships

Sharon, who finished her doctorate in 1994, is now partnered to David, a student in the same department. Her former advisor, Michael, is also David's current advisor and this has provided a unique perspective through which she has been able to reflect on the differences in their relationship with Michael.

> What is interesting though, is how differently David has perceived the relationship. For him, conversations with Michael have usually taken on more the tenor of dialogues over theory, etc. It appears to me, from hearing David talk about his conversations with him (although I have never been around when they have these talks), that he has always viewed David more as a colleague. Not that David would say so, but it sounds that way to me. Of course, as David and I have discussed, he and Michael have been able to have a different relationship because of their gender. For instance, there have been several conferences that David and Michael have attended where they roomed together in the hotel. You and I both know that you have very different conversations with someone that you have known in those circumstances. I think (again, my perceptions, not necessarily reality) that Michael and David have known each other long enough and have shared many long conversations and as a result, David probably didn't look upon

> Michael as being as much of an authority figure as I did. I never had the opportunity to just shoot the shit with Michael late at night, or discuss world events while watching the news. You know, the kinds of conversations you tend to have with someone when you stay in the same room for three or four days. So for me, there was a sense of formality and distance in my relationship with Michael for quite a long time. It took the better part of four years to get to a more comfortable, more collegial relationship.
>
> However, as I said, once I got to the point where *I* was comfortable saying, "No, I'm doing it this way for this reason," Michael seemed satisfied. It was almost as if that were part of the process, and he needed me to get to that point in order to make the rest of the process work. Now, I see David scrambling sometimes to research something more, read another book, etc., and I ask him, "Well, is it something you feel really strongly about? Is THIS what you want to say and how you want to say it? Is this a point where you should be digging in your heels? Because he's waiting for you to do that..." But I can tell that he is not yet at the place where he feels he CAN dig in his heels, and so he keeps running from pillar to post trying to re-work portions of the dissertation to meet Michael's expectations or address Michael's arguments. Oh, well, kids! You just can't tell 'em anything!

Through this vignette we are able to understand some of the ways in which men and women relate differently to each other. Absent from the male-female relationship is the shared life experience that provides a common ground for more informal interactions between students and faculty. And it is these more informal interactions that can add depth and a greater degree of comfort to the relationship between a student and an advisor. How such relationships develop in the absence of more informal interactions remains a question for both men and women. There are potential risks for both should either go beyond what are perceived to be acceptable informal limits of the relationship. The safe road is one where both adhere to their formal roles but for many women the absence of this personal dimension — the absence of self in a relationship, can leave us feeling as if we are invisible. And for women, affirmation of self is central to the doctoral process.

> Invisibility is a dangerous and painful condition .... When those who have power to name and to socially construct reality choose not to see you or hear you . . . when someone with the authority of a teacher, say, describes the world and you are not in it, there is a moment of psychic disequilibrium, as if you looked into a mirror and saw nothing (Rich, 1986, p. 199).

The Invisible Lives of Women Doctoral Students

> The department seemed so cold. And the message I started getting very early was that if one is to *be* a researcher that is what one must be — that there is little room in one's life for outside commitments in the form of family and relationships (ones that lasted anyway!)

Despite the progress toward equality in recent years, women continue to bear the primary responsibility for maintaining the family household, preparing meals and caring for children. In a system that does little to recognize the dual roles that women fulfill as scholars and mothers, women often are left feeling unsatisfied with their abilities to fulfill either role adequately.

> I felt like a fraud. I felt like I was definitely *not* doing justice to either the graduate experience or my family life. There just wasn't enough of me to go around!!!!

Women who must also work part-time bear an even greater burden and frequently find themselves doing 'double-time'.

> ... there are no provisions for maternity/paternity leave for RA/TA graduate students working for the university. To gain 6 weeks of leave time, I worked double-time the quarter before I had my first child.

And women know that having children and family responsibilities can mean that, in many instances, they will be seen as less serious than men about their research. Taken to the extreme, these attitudes can be transformed into latent acts of discrimination.

> Several faculty members in my department said that female graduate students who decide to have children while in graduate school are often thought by the department to not be "dedicated" to their research .... My husband was told (by his advisor, and at least one other faculty member) that any woman who got pregnant while in the graduate program before their dissertation proposal meeting would be considered "undedicated" and removed from the program. Essentially, they would not "pass" the dissertation proposal, and would not be allowed to make revisions. He was told that if a student tried to challenge it, the department would simply say the student didn't meet their academic requirements. He was also told that it was OK for men to have children, provided that it didn't interfere with their "duties" in the department.

Women know only too well these kinds of 'silent sanctions' that are used to threaten and intimidate women and rarely are there consequences for faculty who conduct themselves in this way. It is part of the latent academic culture and therefore is not seen to exist.

> At our modern universities, the faculty can break the rules with impunity, since they both make and enforce those rules (Cude, 1987, p. iii).

Cheryl goes on to describe why she and her husband decided to risk beginning a family in spite of this 'advice', how she managed to conceal her pregnancy from the faculty, and how attitudes of the faculty changed when they discovered she was pregnant.

> I hid the pregnancy with large shirts, sweaters and excuses (I take medication which makes you gain weight). I also lucked out because my daughter did not "stick out" much. The decision to start a family was based on some medical advice and we were tired of waiting to have kids. My allergies are worsening, and my doctor advised me to have kids before I was 30 to minimize the risks to me and the babies. I waited for nearly 6 months with my daughter, until I presented (and passed) my dissertation proposal. Under the rules of the department, once the proposal is passed, there is little that can be done to remove you from the program, so I figured I was safe. The reception was "neutral" from my advisor, although I noticed that he seemed suddenly uninterested in working with me on research. Some patronized me (e.g., wouldn't let me carry papers to classes). Most seemed indifferent.

Of the 15 women in the study who wrote most intensely about their experiences, 10 had children but only one is a single mother. All of the women with children described problems they experienced in balancing these dual responsibilities, not the least of which was utter exhaustion. However, the most poignant description of the problems women face as mothers and scholars came from Barbara who is a single mother of two girls. Her story goes beyond that of simply doing double-duty and the fact that she is even in graduate school today speaks of something more than mere persistence; as she describes it, it is more like a pathological drive.

Barbara, though of course that is not her real name, sits here among us in this audience today and I would like to take this moment to thank her personally for sharing her own story of persistence. It is a story that must be heard, and beyond that, one that must be understood in the academy. My own words are no match for hers and therefore, with her permission, I share her story on the next pages, that we might all learn from her experience.

About a year and a half ago my (then 7 year old daughter) became very ill, very suddenly. I and my (then 9 year old) daughter rushed her to the emergency room of the local children's hospital. Sometime in the middle of the night I called a friend to come get my older daughter and take her home to get some sleep. A few hours later the ER physicians had diagnosed the problem as a kidney infection caused by E Coli bacteria, and moved us up to a hospital ward. I sat there in the hospital next to my still-unconscious daughter and thought about my life. There I was, in the hospital with a very sick child (there's another story here about the way my ex-husband has been trying to sabotage my degree, in part by not allowing the children to be sick when with him - you see, they can only be sick when with me to prove that I'm a bad mother for being in grad school (his ego can't take my success.) We entered the hospital on the day after the girls returned home from a paternal visit. The doctors said my daughter had had an untreated bladder infection for some days.)

I sat there in the night thinking about my life, and the reality of it hit me in the face for the first time. I had been a single parent for six years, since my daughters were 1 and 3 years old. I had been raising them by myself with very little help from my ex-husband. Since I had entered the doc program my ex had been doing everything he could to sabotage my progress, from underpaying child support and refusing to pay child care to calling the pediatrician to try to prevent medical care, arguing that all their childhood maladies were really a result of bad mothering (presumably because I was in school.) I was currently embroiled in a court suit to get my ex to pay court-ordered child support.

At the same time I was working part-time running a child care center, my "paying job" (a misnomer as far as child care is concerned) and working half-time on a university research project to qualify for my fellowship. I was enrolled full time in classes as well. I was driving both girls to music lessons and aikido classes every week in all my "spare time", as well as volunteering in their classrooms and driving on field trips. I had been in school for so long that I had no social life to speak of and only the few friends left who can exist on infrequent phone calls and twice yearly meetings over coffee. I was still seeing a therapist once a week as part of a long incest/physical abuse recovery process, and receiving weekly treatments for a back injury suffered in a car accident a few years before. I existed on almost no sleep.

My friends and peers had long sung the refrain "I just don't know how you do it", and I had long replied, "I just do" and joked about the pathological nature of my independence and over achievement. But as I sat there in the hospital next to my unconscious child, knowing I had another child fearful and worried who needed me and whom I couldn't even care for in that moment, my whole perspective shifted. For the first time I really saw how alone I was, and what a toll my multi-layered life had taken. I sat there and thought about how I could now not go to school (I'd been told my daughter would need at least two weeks of intense medical care, either in the hospital or with an IV at home), and I could not do my research work so I would no longer qualify for my fellowship. I had no idea how I'd pay the medical bills and anticipated a fight over them with my ex (how true that turned out to be.) I had no savings to speak of, lived day to day and paycheck to paycheck, and had no family to fall back on and no one from whom to borrow money.

I sat there in the middle of the night looking out on the darkness and realized that I'd just been going to school on faith. I had put on blinders and just kept taking one more step down the path, not looking side to side, not considering the "what ifs" or the "you can'ts." I'd just decided to

go for this degree, and not let my circumstances and the illogic of my pursuit deter me. I'd shifted my school and family life around so that the kids could still have their lessons and my presence in their day to day lives, and I could still go to school. I'd managed to find the hours and minutes to do all that was required of me. But it was all built on the very thin foundation of everything going right. My daughter's illness was the first thing that had gone so wrong that I had to really stop and consider what I was doing, and how impossible it all seemed. For the first time I felt like asking myself, "how have you been doing this?" "what made you think you could do the work of six women all by yourself?" I tried to figure out what I could give up in my life to take this new development into account, and of course the first thing on the list was school.

And I realized that I could no longer envision my life without this degree. I could no longer return to being simply a school teacher or the owner of a small business but that I had become some other person engaged in some other pursuit that involved a whole different kind of activity (research) that meant a great deal to me. I now identified myself as a student, a researcher, an investigator working on particular problems that were personally and socially salient. I knew that to give up school would mean to give up a part of myself that I could no longer live without. I knew that school had become a means to the end of exerting the power of my experience and intelligence in pursuit of changing the world in a personally meaningful way, and for all the grandiosity of that goal, I couldn't give it up.

The short conclusion is that I am still in school, still plodding along, but that experience, that night of revelation changed the whole academic experience for me in some crucial way. That night took my blinders from me, so that I now am constantly aware of how improbable my success is, and of how many roadblocks society and universities throw in the paths of women raising young children, or women struggling with recovery processes, or women without money. Now I no longer have the blithe confidence that I will work everything out somehow. I no longer take for granted that I have some special grace or a pathological drive that will get me through anything. And I often feel angry at the way my experience and that of women like me is so invisible. I use my anger to fuel my work, because I really believe that my perspective and that of women like me needs to be heard, and that one of the reasons it's given little credibility is that most single moms get driven out of grad school long before they finish their degrees.

Grad school has been much harder since my daughter's illness, because I've had to struggle to come to terms with the overwhelming nature of it all that finally came clear to me on that night. I've had to learn to live with a different and more acute awareness of my exhaustion and isolation. I'm not sure I would have even embarked on this degree process if I hadn't had such a finely honed denial/survival system left over from growing up in a family where survival was always in question. In a sense, I think it was that denial that got me far so far that when it was stripped away I realized both the necessity and the enormity of completing what I had undertaken.

I didn't realize I'd be so long winded, Bobbi. Guess I just needed to tell this tale. I've been so overwhelmed and exhausted lately that the difficulty of this endeavor is very much in my face. This last year I've lost my stamina. After I finished my generals in December I got fairly ill for a while. Now I'm no longer functional after 10 pm, so I'm having trouble getting my work done, cause my kids don't really settle till after nine (then there's dishes, laundry, bills, the house, etc.) No matter how diligently I stare at the computer screen or text of some book, if it's after 10 my body and mind refuse to work. I turns out it can't really be done, after all! (school, running a business, raising kids, all that) at least not within the parameters of an 18 hour work day.

Experiences like those of Barbara illustrate a systemic bias that disadvantages women and preserves the androcentric nature of the academy. It is generally assumed that women in the academy, who also manage more conventional roles, will be able to fulfill their academic responsibilities with the same degree of ease as men. Yet women who raise children and study part-time are rarely eligible for the same financial awards and assistantships as full-time students and their part-time status often is used against them to suggest a lack of commitment to their studies.

It is not surprising that the social and institutional support structures, which could bring equality of access and opportunity to women, are largely absent from the academy. To implement the necessary changes would require those in positions of authority, predominantly men, to acknowledge that raising children has different consequences for men and women and any shift in the status quo, clearly, would not be in men's own best interests. Until these differences in the social consequences of men's and women's conventional roles are formally acknowledged through institutional policies and practices, women doctoral students, by virtue of their gender, will continue to be disadvantaged.

Surviving 'Instructional' Fallout

Many women in the study have written about experiences related to comprehensive and preliminary oral exams and while a few women had some very positive experiences, most recounted these experiences as being one of the most intense, exhausting and stressful stages of their program. Several factors are emerging from their stories that illustrate how anxiety is intensified unnecessarily during this stage. First, a number of women describe having to negotiate reading lists and other exam material individually with each committee member. The result is that no single committee member, including the chair, has an overview of whether the expectations being made of the student are reasonable within the given time constraints. And not wanting to be perceived as whiners and complainers by those who will be their judges, students alone must live with the fallout of what is fundamentally a poor instructional practice.

> The first committee member I met with decided that I needed to read 8 books ... another wanted me to read two books that he thought would help me with the dissertation ... and my chair wanted me to read a couple of books ... within the next six weeks. Talk about depressed! Those weeks were a blur for me. I mostly spent my time cramming for the exams and panicking.

A second factor contributing to women's stress is the element of surprise. Unnecessary anxiety is provoked when the process moves forward in ways that are counter to what is expected or that which previously has been articulated.

> Of course, the questions he said he would ask were not the questions that appeared on the exam. Each faculty member had a different day for the exam; So there I was, the first day of the exam, and the questions were completely different from what he had said he would ask. I was in a mild panic.

Again, this experience provides an example of the inattention given to quality instructional practices. Writing test questions that accurately convey examiners' intentions is both an art and a science, and where there is either an absence of attention or a lack of coordination of these activities, students will bear the ultimate consequences. And once students experience these kinds of surprises in their programs, the unanticipated shift in expectations, they are forever wary of what might lie in store for them around the next corner. Little by little the accumulated effect of repeated surprises can lead to the erosion of trust in others and confidence in one's own abilities.

A third factor contributing to women's anxiety relates to expectations that often remain unarticulated and invisible to students.

> Supposedly, the faculty members should give your advisor some sort of feedback as to how they thought you did on the exams. It's a lead-pipe cinch that, if they think you screwed up on some area in the writtens, that will become the major focus for their questioning during the orals. But of course, no one gave my advisor any feedback. I met with him the day before the orals, in a dead panic, hoping I'd get some idea as to what I needed to focus on for the next day. Ken, of course, had still not even read my answers to any of the questions. Another committee member had been out of the country in the intervening two weeks. So there was no way to know what to expect.

The absence or vagueness of the criteria by which students will be deemed to have satisfied a committee's expectations in the exams is among the most frustrating and anxiety producing experiences facing students in the candidacy phase of their studies. Too often, the discipline-specific nature of the field or a particular topic serves as a pretext to neglect this important part of the instructional process. If faculty cannot or do not clearly articulate the criteria on which success is dependent, how then can students develop realistic assessments of their own abilities and talents?

Beyond some of these fundamental instructional practices which too often are neglected in doctoral programs, issues of fairness and respect emerge in women's stories that frequently arise around the mixed messages students receive from faculty. In one student's experience, the faculty chose to protect their own interests through a game of hide and seek rather than engage her in a forthright discussion about the academic strengths and limitations of her work.

> I took my comps last August. Before the comps, a professor told me not to get on a soapbox while writing the comps. So I took the comps, taking care not to get on a soapbox while writing my answers.

I had to wait 2 months before hearing results of the comps. I, and the one other PhD candidate who took the comps when I did, learned of the results via a letter. We were both told that we had passed part of the comps and failed part of the comps. We were told to appear before the faculty in a meeting 2 weeks hence. We were not told what to expect from the meetings.

I had previously made an appointment to talk with the chair of the department. He canceled the appointment. I tried making an appointment with another professor; she refused to schedule an appointment. I tried making contact with a third professor; he blew me off. Clearly, the faculty was avoiding me. I was intimidated - what did they have to say to me that could only be said when all seven of them were together and I was all alone?

The meeting finally took place. The chair of the department tried to make me guess why I had failed part of the comps. I couldn't, as I had no idea. My GPA is a 4.0, and my academic record is excellent. I had no idea why I had failed. They finally made it clear that I had failed the first question because I had not made a strong argument. I mentioned that I was told not to get on a soapbox. The chair of the department asked me who had said this to me, but as the professor who had said this was sitting next to me I was too intimidated to answer. My meeting was cut short and I was never told why I failed the second question.

I petitioned the faculty to retake the comps again ASAP. The soonest they would reschedule was 6 weeks later. In the interim, I approached several faculty members and told them it was a faculty member who advised me not to get on a soapbox. They seemed uninterested in this piece of information. Two said, "Well, it wasn't me." I asked the faculty member who had given me this bad advice why she hadn't said that she was the one when the chair asked who said this to me; she blew me off.

The night before I was scheduled to retake the comps, I realized that I had never been told what was wrong with my 2nd question. I called the department chair at home and asked him; he couldn't remember. He named another faculty member who might remember, and I called this person. He said that nothing was wrong with my second question. It is unclear to me why I was failed instead of asked to remediate, which is usually what happens when someone has trouble with part but not all of the comps. In any case, I passed the comps when I took them the 2nd time. Fortunately, the faculty marked my exam and gave me the results within a week. I lost a semester, however, due to this fiasco. I could have been working on my dissertation instead of dealing with the comps all this semester.

Why there exists an unwillingness among some faculty to communicate and discuss with students their progress and achievement on candidacy exams, even when they are successful, remains unclear. At best, the practice evokes hard questions about the criteria used to make critical decisions in graduate students' lives. At worst, the failure to engage students in genuine discourse about their academic work leaves faculty vulnerable to criticisms regarding accountability and the ethical conduct of their professional responsibilities. And, intended or not, these rituals of silence perpetuate the mystique surrounding the doctoral process.

Ethics Gone Wrong: The Ultimate Breach of Trust

Among the original respondents to my study were two graduates (one male and one female) and one doctoral candidate (female) each of whom described first-hand experiences in which advisors 'adopted' the student's work for their own use. This despicable and cruel act represents the ultimate breach of trust in the academy. It is an experience that can fracture students' self-

confidence and potentially destroy their motivation to finish. Yet the theft of student work is an act for which faculty rarely are held accountable. Students know that to go public with these experiences is to bring the full weight and attention of the institution to bear on their shoulders alone. Counselling and therapy, although not uncommon for many doctoral students, helped the two graduates come to terms with the consequences of these experiences. Maggie, a current doctoral candidate, describes her struggle to move forward after such an experience.

> After my orals I remember sitting across from my advisor, who was describing my performance as 'stellar', asking me where I ever came up with the thesis that I'd developed in my comprehensive exams. I'd been scanning titles in the library and ran across a theme and what I'd done in my exam was use this concept and apply it to my field. After my exams I took a couple of months off to recover from the birth of my son and in the spring I picked up the proposal again and was beginning to work with my advisor on getting it together. Then I read in the university newsletter that my advisor and two other colleagues had presented a conference session using the theme I'd developed in my comps. I was sitting at my desk at work and remember trembling outright for here was the seminal idea of my work presented at a major national conference. Several times I gently urged my advisor for a copy of the paper. I discussed it with her saying I was very interested in what they had presented at the conference. No paper was ever forthcoming. She avoided the topic, never telling me anything until eventually I dropped it. I decided to go forth as usual trying to convince myself that she has more integrity that to use my ideas without giving me any credit. We worked together well on a couple of different projects over the next year.
>
> A few months ago she mentioned to me that she was revising the syllabus for her core course and that she'd been looking over the book I'd used to develop my thesis. I just nodded and didn't say anything or think anything about it until I happened to speak with another student a few weeks ago. She's a good friend of mine and I confided in her explaining the difficulty I was having with my motivation and the nagging question in the back of my mind about my advisor's use of my exam concepts. She looked at me and calmly described the course she was taking from my advisor and described the very theme that I'd developed in my exams and said that my advisor hadn't mentioned me at all. I flipped out and cried hysterically. I asked my friend for a copy of the syllabus if she got a chance but I didn't want to include her in this mess.
>
> I received the copy of the syllabus recently. Time for me now has little meaning. The syllabus is actually a wonderful outline for my dissertation. My advisor has been counselling me from it this semester. I can tell. So I am tormented now because anything I do will look like, Oh, you were so and so's student. And how do I approach her on this one? My advisor is instructing more than a dozen graduate students this semester on my topic that I developed in my exams and she hasn't mentioned that at all. She has acquired it for herself and feels it is hers to develop at will. We have a major communication problem here but I don't feel I'm in a position of power to address the issue. My advisor can make life hell. So now I'm stuck with a rather peculiar and disheartening position. Do I continue on? Change my topic? Walk away? The student has taught the instructor. I just wish I understood what to do. What is she thinking? What is her impression? I cannot, or perhaps I do not want to believe that she would be so callous. I know how strongly she feels about anyone touching her research.
>
> So as you can tell the issue of trust is shattered here and my heart is heavy when it comes to my study. The love of the idea, the self-confidence gained from my exams and the orals, that final feeling of 'You really did well' weighs on me heavily . The idea is displayed as someone else's or so it appears. In many ways I am resolved to finish the project and continue to use it in my own teaching, but I feel quite strongly that the academy is no place for me with power structures embedded in those few 'scholars' who are blind, manipulative and cruel. What kind of heritage does this pass on?

> I hope some day to talk with my advisor about this but for now I just try to go on. I have another draft just about ready for her. What I am fighting now is that empty feeling and the fear that the passion for my study is dead. Now, there is no sense of failure, not even the fear of failure. Only helplessness. I believe I will be a stronger, more compassionate person when this is all resolved. For now, it's just getting through it.

Maggie wrote to me more recently and having had more time to reflect on her experiences, shared her current resolve to finish her degree.

> I am resolved to continue regardless of what it looks like and what is still so very much unknown. Perhaps it is more important to me that even though my work is so very personal, it is not lost. I desire resolution and when that time is right, it will occur. For now, I have found an inner strength and conviction that will sustain me through it. I feel I have been through many stages, perhaps stages of grief. At any rate, the anger, despair, and confusion have been experienced. I feel I am moving into a new stage. This new stage is one of reflection. My relationship with my advisor is important to me on both a professional and personal level. I have to believe that the demarcation between both is what makes this particularly difficult but not hopeless. I believe in the integrity of both of us and it is important that this is prominent in my continued studies and professional development. I desire to learn from life, not despise it.

The Transformation of Self

The experience of pursuing the Ph.D. is for many women like taking a magnifying glass and applying it to every aspect of our lives. It brings existing feelings, concerns and problems to the forefront and provides a new lens through which we reflect on who we are and who we are becoming. For women, this need to make sense of our experiences, the need to reflect, to understand and connect our feelings and thoughts with our experience, is an essential aspect of self and a central part of the doctoral experience.

> There is an uncomfortable distance sometimes between the ground on which we stand and the place we are trying to reach.

To understand women's pursuit of the doctorate solely as an intellectual transformation is to fail to understand the importance for women of this connection between thought and self.

> I remember in the first year of my PhD program, we were basically made to question everything about ourselves intellectually: how we thought, why we believed/learned/thought as we did, etc. And reading literally hundreds of articles, books, etc. It was as though we weren't worthy of an original thought ... then the second year, we were told to start thinking about our research. Who would be on our committee? What topic? What theoretical grounding? As though, having survived the first year, we were now worthy and capable of becoming baby scholars ourselves. But the questioning and epistemological shake-up of the first year stayed with me for quite awhile.

The Impostor Syndrome

For women, the doctorate *is* the pursuit of self. The intellectual *is* the personal. Academic grades may be an indicator of one's performance capabilities but regardless of how high they are,

alone, they are insufficient to allow one to develop a sense of self as potential researcher and scholar. Our work must live in connection to the self we know on the inside — the self that faculty rarely take time to know or care about. When there is a dissonance between this self and one's work, many women describe feeling like impostors. It may begin with the feeling that other graduate students know more than you do, or the feeling that, in comparison to the work of your mentors, your own research isn't real or sufficiently important. It may be confounded by feeling like an outsider when your orientation is toward qualitative research and you find yourself located in a quantitatively oriented department that gives little recognition to your voice. It is an uncertainty about one's self and one's work that develops, in part, through social comparisons of our self with others, and it is intensified when faculty do not attend to the importance of this connection between self and thought, between self and scholarship.

> She was such a very cold person ... She was, however, a very supportive mentor and seemed to think I had a lot to offer academia and the profession, something I never did come to see in myself the entire time in graduate school. I remember making the comment several times that I felt like a fraud, that I was pulling the grades, but didn't feel as if I were getting and retaining the knowledge I needed and, in many ways, throughout the entire experience I always felt like an outsider in the department.

> I felt as though I were going through the motions of developing and writing a study, but some day they (*real* PhDs and scholars) would find out that I was just blowing smoke. So I'm sure that some of this was on my mind as well when I was writing the final chapter and preparing to defend.

For many students, the doctorate involves a process of working through the self-doubts and fears that emerge as we develop this central connection between our self and our work, and as we try to develop accurate evaluations of our own abilities and strengths.

> This morning he told me that he's started having dreams that he won't finish, that he's not good enough, etc. Well, of course, I've been there and done that.

Symbiotic Crisis of Confidence

Many of the experiences described by women reflect not only these feelings of self-doubt, but they also reflect a symbiotic relationship with the dissertation — a feeling of being both attracted to and repelled by the dissertation. The investment of self — the creative aspects of scholarship, the time, energy and financial resources — provide the forward impetus. But it is the pain — the fear and self-doubts, the isolation, and the loneliness that pull us back.

> ... you're scared spitless at some point in the process. It's like you want to go back or quit or stop moving inexorably toward whatever it is that happens at the end, but you just can't.

> I remember crying to my partner the night before my birthday (which was four days before the defense) about how much I hated the fucking Ph.D., and how worried I was that, after everything it had cost me, I still might not get it if I blew the defense.

This symbiotic relationship reflects a self, divided; it is as if women must serve two masters: the self who seeks human connection and affirmation, and the intellectual self who will see the task through to completion. In the latter stages of the degree as women approach completion there often is an emerging confidence that calms these self-doubts.

> ... basically it comes down to *knowing* that you are capable versus *feeling and believing* it. And that's the toughest part of all. I know it's the part I struggled with the most. I think this issue was particularly strong for me as I was trying to write the last [infamous] chapter.

And ultimately, for many women, there is an emergence from this symbiotic crisis of confidence.

> Much as I hated the fucking thing — by which I mean much of the doctoral process — I also wouldn't have *not* done it for the world. I am who I am because (and perhaps also in spite) of it. It gave me new insights into the world and into myself. It introduced me to some fabulous people, many of whom I count among my best friends today.

However, the doctoral experience is not without its disappointments along the way. Among the many disappointments described by women, the most significant are the absence of meaningful discourse and collegial relationships.

> The doctoral experience more often fell short, rather than exceeded, the expectations I took with me into the educational arena. Probably because I tend to be both an idealist and a tad bit of a romanticist I had this notion that grad school would offer stimulating discourse and dialogue between students and faculty. Quite possibly the biggest disappointment I encountered was in finding this discourse absent from my educational experience.

> Critical thinking *only* entailed the ability to tear down and negatively criticize a piece of work, ontology, or discipline. It did not entail the essence of what I see as "good" critical thinking, the ability to recognize the value in something that is "good" in its own right. This created a very negative atmosphere.

> Most of the students themselves were so consumed with concerns of continued funding and "competing" with one another for these scarce resources that few relationships were formed. And, those that were formed tended to align themselves along faculty interests so, there was at all times an inherent division among the students based upon this.

And the reflections women share about their experiences at the conclusion of the doctorate are very different from the expectations with which they entered.

> The graduate experience, all six years of it, felt much more like a fraternity hazing than an educational experience. I got very tired of constantly being asked to "prove" my worth to faculty and fellow students.

Post-Dissertation Depression

Pursuit of the doctorate is an olympian task. And as olympians know only too well, it is a process that demands sacrifice and single-minded focus. But when I listen to women speak of the sacrifices they make, I hear the voices of exhaustion and loneliness. They speak repeatedly of long hours of overwork, of weight loss from stress and anxiety, of weight gain from inactivity, of self-

enforced isolation, of disturbed sleep patterns — of experiences that more closely resemble cult-like behaviours than they do the performance of olympians.

Self-reflection, intensified during the doctorate, does not end with graduation. Women continue to examine their lives in the context of both past and anticipated experiences, sometimes emerging with very mixed feelings about what has been accomplished and a need to come to terms with who one was and who one has become in the process. And often the feeling of pride that should be present has been tainted.

> Before I began my graduate experience I wish I had been given some forewarning about the solitary nature of the experience, especially as it unfolds in the latter stages of the educational journey. When I am mentoring graduate students, I want to at least attempt to prepare them for this sense of isolation and the "let down" that occurs following the culmination of the dissertation. I was ill prepared for this and the shock of it all added to the personal depression I experienced after the completion of the PhD education. If I regret anything of the experience it is the inability to experience utter joy at what I have been able to achieve — the emptiness and loneliness sometimes override all else in my life.

> There are many things I've found and re-read lately that remind me of the person I was. To some extent, that person forms the core of who I am now, while in many other ways that person may no longer exist. In retrospect, I think I liked her better than I may have realized at the time. I need to work to find and reconnect with those parts that I liked best. One part that I have begun to rediscover, although not in all its youthful intensity, is the passion. I think at some point in the past I was probably more committed to various things, people or causes than I am now. I won't say it was a more emotional attachment, although it may be that my commitments were less discerning than they are now. Then again, maybe it was the environment; there was so much to be committed to, whereas now I don't really see myself as part of something larger. A major portion of my identity was changed by completing the dissertation. That had been a major focus for me for so long, and suddenly it was gone. Ironic—so much of my prior self-identity had been erased when I entered the doctoral program, and it was erased again when I left.

> I only recently had my degree framed and put in on my office wall (everyone in my office tends to display their college ... degrees, it seems to be part of our culture there) .... I rarely if ever use the "doctor," although my firm uses it, especially when introducing me to new clients .... For a long time, I didn't really want to admit that I had the doctorate. I think that's sort of a denial thing; it cost me so much in terms of finances and emotional toll that I sort of wanted to forget it once the defense was done. Ironic, isn't it? I worked for five years to get the degree, now I don't even tell people I have it .... Maybe that's why I have such an aversion to the Ph.D. thing right now. It is irrevocably intertwined in my mind with memories of the bleakest point in my life to date .... I guess, in time, I will forgive the Ph.D. program/process — and myself — for everything that happened along the way. But it will take awhile.

Many women in this study and in other discussion forums have described their experiences with depression and many have sought counselling both during and following completion of the degree to help them come to terms with the emotional toll the process takes on them. Depression is only one among many of the unanticipated outcomes of the degree.

> Parts of the doctoral experience are still too fresh, still somewhat painful .... I only recently had my degree framed and put in on my office wall (everyone in my office tends to display their

> degrees, it seems to be part of our culture there). I officially graduated in 7 months ago. I rarely if ever use the "doctor," ..... For a long time, I didn't really want to admit that I had the doctorate. I think that's sort of a denial thing; it cost me so much in terms of finances and emotional toll that I sort of wanted to forget it once the defense was done. Ironic, isn't it? I worked for five years to get the degree, now I don't even tell people I have it.

For many of the women who participated in the study, separation and divorce also have been associated with the doctorate. As I write this morning my thoughts are with Zoe, who, over the past months has come to know her self that is emerging from this process and who, last evening told her husband of 23 years she would be leaving.

Some women are not prepared to risk everything and while I know that Nancy will finish, it does perhaps explain, in part, why many women leave before completing their degrees.

> I'm not much into testing my limits — the adrenaline (or whatever) rush that comes from 'near-death' experiences (bungee cord jumping, for instance) isn't my style. I could probably 'do' that sort of thing too, but wouldn't unless forced. I'm willing —and eager — to *push* my limits, though because I think that's where I learn. But this requires a sense of where I am and where the edge is .... Perhaps I'm overly fearful of failing, so make darn sure I CAN do something before I get myself into it.

For those who do complete their degrees, the cost and the accumulated losses are many and women are asking some very hard questions about the process they've been through.

> In many ways I wonder why the process seems to be made so deliberately difficult. Why must we negotiate these relationships with advisors, jump through the hoops brought about by classes, and — oh, yes — write a 300+ page "paper" to finish the degree? The classes are by far the easiest part, even when you're taking four at a time! .... Why are we requiring a 300-page dissertation when so few academics will ever write a full-length book? Most academics write journal articles. Many are also now working collaboratively in interdisciplinary studies. Why do we insist on this solitary vision quest motif as the only legitimate means for completing a Ph.D.?

> Having survived the process, I can begin to understand why some academics are so bitter. At the same time, just surviving the degree for most people in academe is only the beginning...then they start the tenure grind. And IF you manage to get tenure, why the hell not just sleep late for a couple of years? I've known several faculty members who, by the time they finished the Ph.D., landed a job and jumped through the tenure hoops, were simply too exhausted or too burned out to care anymore. They literally didn't give a shit about teaching or anything else. We seem to be setting ourselves up to perpetuate that kind of attitude, and it will likely get worse as more and more Ph.D.'s graduate and find fewer and fewer jobs available. The pressure on those who DO land a position will be enormous, especially because they know there are so many willing and jobless Ph.D.'s willing to take their place if they stumble.

Conclusion

Women expect learning to be a process of inquiry that is both challenging and affirming, not one that is competitive and combative. When words like loneliness, isolation, exhaustion, stress, anxiety, hazing, ridicule, sexual harassment, benign neglect and even abuse are central to women's doctoral experiences we need to ask what it is that women are being taught in the academy. There has been an assumption in academe that the best and brightest among us will survive. However, for many women, the question is not whether they *could* survive; rather it is whether they are *willing* to survive given the enormity of the obstacles confronting them.

This paper has highlighted some of the preliminary findings of a study currently in progress. I would like to express my most sincere appreciation to the women who have so willingly and so openly shared with me what have been some of the most painful moments of their lives. Our lives and our friendships are richer for knowing your stories.

> *Until the missing story of ourselves is told, nothing besides told can suffice us: we shall go on quietly craving it.*
>
> Probably the most important journey we will ever take is the journey inward. Unless we know who we are, how can we possibly offer what we have?
>
> Each of us is a unique combination of heredity and experiences. No one else has to offer what we have to offer. Yet, if we do not have the self-awareness to undergird our uniqueness, we never make our contribution.
>
> I *need* to know my story ... all of it.
>
> Anne Wilson Schaef
> Meditations for Women Who Do Too Much

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Appendix A

Female Doctoral Enrollment in Canada by Registration Status, as a Percent of Total Enrollment, 1973-94.

Year	Full-Time	Part-Time	Total %
1972-73	18.8	21.3	19.5
1973-74	21.2	22.9	21.7
1974-75	22.7	22.7	22.7
1975-76	23.9	23.8	23.9
1976-77	24.8	25.2	24.9
1977-78	26.2	25.6	26.1
1978-79	27.5	27.4	27.5
1979-80	29.2	28.8	29.1
1980-81	29.9	30.2	30.0
1981-82	31.0	31.5	31.1
1982-83	31.8	32.3	31.9
1983-84	32.4	33.7	32.7
1984-85	32.6	35.5	33.2
1985-86	33.2	37.4	34.0
1986-87	34.0	38.2	34.8
1987-88	34.8	39.1	35.6
1988-89	34.7	38.3	35.3
1989-90	34.8	39.0	35.6
1990-91	34.4	40.5	35.5
1991-92	34.6	41.6	35.8
1992-93	34.9	43.2	36.2
1993-94	36.6	43.8	37.7

Source: Education in Canada, Catalogue No. 81-229, Statistics Canada.